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THE FAMILY

My so far random mention of individual brothers and sisters may not have given a full picture of my family, and it is time I did. My father and mother were married in 1902 at Cocanada, a place far up the East Coast, where Doreen was born in 1904. As the first-born and a girl, she was naturally very close to my father who could refuse her nothing. Pat followed in 1906, also at Cocanada. Malcolm and the twins, Mildred and Maude, were born in the two succeeding years, probably at Atmakur in Kurnool district where all three died as infants. My mother often spoke with feeling about Malcolm, whom she described as a most beautiful child. After the deaths of three infants in quick succession, it was but natural that Ralph, on arrival in Bellary in 1909, became very special to her. He was certainly always a lovable person. After him came Margaret, also in Bellary in 1910 and Winifred in Cocanada in 1913. Cyril and Terence followed in 1915 and 1917, both in Kurnool where Terence, too, died as an infant. I was the only one born not in the mofussil but in Bangalore in 1920, after my mother had settled there to give the family a proper schooling. Being a teacher and a pianist, she had started their early education herself, including playing the piano on a portable pedal-organ worked with the help of a peon. Today (1998), only Doreen and I remain. At ninety three she is frail and in need of care, and is living in a retirement home in Cornwall, close to Ralph's son Justin, who visited her almost every day until his premature death in 1998.

I am sorry I did not have more of the company of my elder brothers and sisters after we all grew up, for I would have liked to have shared their memories of early family life in the districts before I was born. My lasting impression, carried from my earliest days, is of a close and united family disturbed only by my mother's unfortunate bouts of uncontrollable hysteria, of standing firmly by

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each other in the face of financial difficulties after my father died, and the many comings and goings inevitable in a big family whose members continually moved to different places for higher studies and later for work. While my mother kept house in Bangalore, my father stayed on alone in the one or other of the Telugu districts of the Presidency until he retired in 1927. By that time we had moved from Curley Street, first to Cornwell Road in 1926 and then to Prime Street the very next year. In 1928 we moved to Rose Lane, our last real home as a family, until we dispersed in mid-1935. All four homes were within easy reach of Richmond Park.

Doreen and the two elder boys were in college by the time my father retired, Doreen doing medicine at Lady Hardinge, New Delhi, and the boys at Presidency, Madras, where Pat was doing his Honours in Geology and Ralph in Literature. They came home twice a year for their holidays, and great would be my anticipation as I waited for the clip-clop of the horse and carriage which brought them from the station. (In 1942, on my final return from Loyola, there was neither carriage nor taxi available during those war days, so I put my stuff on a bullock-cart and trudged home by its side.) I can remember the three elder children in the family only as adults, Doreen practicing scales in magical sweeps on the piano, Pat in his school AFI uniform with his ammunition boots and puttees, and Ralph in his final year at school making a clean sweep of all his class subjects on Prize Day. Meanwhile Margaret, Winnie and Cyril were growing up, but were not so old that I could not share their company and their fun at parties and outings. One memory from 1927 that still lingers is of both girls sobbing bitterly together, Margaret because she had not got through her Middle School examination, and Winnie because Margaret had failed!

I had a special and abiding affection for Margaret from my earliest days when, hardly in her teens, she was made my effective nanny and the Cinderella of the house. She was the only one who did not pass her Senior Cambridge, but she was the prettiest in the family, took an interest in everything around her, spoke well, wrote a neat hand, played popular music on the piano, and was a naturally

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happy girl. My memories alternate between her light-hearted conversation, her laughter and her cheery whistling, and her many bitter tears following one punishment or other, often on my account, at my mother's hands. I deeply regret not having been able to give her a home in her last days. Winnie did her Intermediate at Queen Mary's, Madras, her BA at St Joseph's, Bangalore, and her Licentiate of Teaching at Lady Willingdon, again at Madras, before taking posts in various schools in India. Cyril did not complete his Intermediate at St Joseph's as he had to leave three months early, a Gentleman Cadet bound for the Indian Military Academy, Dehra Dun, where he graduated in 1937, a Commissioned Officer in the Indian Army. He was actually more artistically inclined than soldierly, could draw and paint well, and had progressed to a fair degree in piano under Mrs. Fewkes, my future wife's cousin.

I was too young to have known my father intimately in the four years left to him after retiring. I recall his slight build, his twinkling eyes in a benign face, and his soft voice that reflected his gentle nature. He had perfect, copper-plate handwriting and was skilful with his hands. He once made a fancy-dress costume for Winnie, a large replica of a Swan Ink bottle made from navy-blue cloth and wire. He painted the big label accurate to the last detail, and made the cork out of gold-painted corrugated cardboard to fit on her head. He kept canaries as a hobby and made all the cages himself, beautifully finished and fitted with a turn-table device for changing their food and water without giving them room to escape. When it came to making the aviary he called in a man to help. About to pay him at the end of the day, he spotted a pair of his pliers in the man's waist-band. He pulled it out, whereupon the man made a dash for the gate, pursued by my father who, far outpaced, flung the pliers at him. It was the only time I saw him lose his temper.

For his more sedentary relaxation he used to read Wodehouse, reclining in his easy-chair with its curved back and extensible arms. I recall seeing a copy of "The Clicking of Cuthbert" on his table, and when I asked him what it was about he chuckled and said, "Wait till you're older; you'll laugh when you read it". He played bridge at

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the All Saints (later the Richmond) Institute, and now the Frank Anthony Junior School, which was near enough to our house for the wail of a saxophone to keep him awake whenever there was a dance. Even otherwise, his serious illness and personal worries would have caused him to sleep uneasily, and there were times when, up before dawn myself to get ready for some scout excursion, I would find him already awake, sipping tea while still in his dressing-gown and night-cap. It never struck me that he might have been in pain.

He was a pious man, regular in his devotions, and I can still see him walking to Sunday mass in his cream suit and brown boots, his teak walking-stick with its ivory, hound's-head handle swinging by his side. At family prayers he would stop in the middle of a line and ask me what the last word was. "Little wool-gatherer" would be his usual rebuke when I could not answer. Unlike my mother, he never beat me, and my only punishment when he found I had stolen some change from the string-bag in which he kept the family money was a quiet chiding and advice as he walked with me in the garden. (I did not get any regular pocket-money until I became a boarder, and just got used mostly to doing without.)

He was still alive when the four elder children left home to start their own careers. Doreen was a doctor in a mission hospital at Kumbakonam, the centre of a brilliant sect of Brahmins (but also a word used by the British to indicate craftiness), Pat was a forest officer in distant Assam, and Margaret a stenographer at the Diocesan Press, Madras, where the improper approaches of her employer soon caused my father to call her home. Ralph was in England awaiting the results of his ICS examination when my father died before knowing of his success. Hence it fell to Doreen and Pat to be the family's main support, a duty they selflessly assumed despite being still very junior in service. Doreen virtually took over the girls, Margaret until she joined the Presidency General Hospital, Calcutta, as a trainee-nurse, and Winnie until she completed her graduate teacher's training. Pat and Doreen together saw to the needs of my mother and us two younger brothers. Ralph was unable to help, for even when he did come out it was with a wife and child to a service

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where late marriage was the rule and where he was expected to maintain a European standard of life on an Indian's salary. Any savings he might have made as a junior Sub-Collector went towards repaying a loan-scholarship he had taken from the Official Trustee of Bengal and an equal amount borrowed from friends and relatives to see him through his two years of study in England.

After my father's death there followed five years of difficulty for the family, mainly, of course, for Doreen and Pat, but especially for my mother. She went about her work bravely, keeping her spirits up by singing tunes remembered from her girlhood or those that were popular at the time. In the evenings she would sometimes visit a friend or see a picture, always wearing her blue straw toque, the only presentable hat she had. Head-wear for Anglo-Indians was *de riguer*, and not being able always to afford one from a shop, she would sometimes attempt to make her own, with results that usually led to considerable agitation on our part. She once contrived a creation from an old felt hat that my father had discarded, cutting it here and turning it up there until it resembled nothing so much as a Viking's helmet, causing us to squirm and bite our nails when she wore it in public. To help make ends meet, she started giving piano lessons. Two or three friends, knowing our situation, sent their children to join me at her classes. But as this was meant more to help her than to learn, not all of them persevered, and the classes did not continue for long.

Pat, aware of his duty as the eldest son, assumed the lead in keeping the home and family going. He would have done so even if my father had not made his anxieties known on his last visit home, for though he had a sense of fun and a love of life, he was a man of sterling character. He put off marrying a sweet girl and life-long friend, Phyllis Dunning, daughter of a Mysore police officer, who would have made him an ideal wife, and eventually lost her as a result. And so with neither initial debts nor family responsibilities of his own, he joined our eldest sister in taking up those left to him by our father. His life up till then had not been without interesting incident, and I must give him more than just a paragraph.

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In school he had been a moderate scholar, confessing to me when he saw my High School results that he himself had got “a mere third” in his finals. Even that had been a near thing. In his last year in school he and a classmate, Nobby Jones, jumped the convent wall after dark one evening, put on masks, and raided the girls’ study, causing pandemonium all around. In the confusion that followed, a nun lost her veil and, worse, Nobby lost his mask, and thereby stood revealed! Both boys were summarily expelled despite my mother’s plea to the Principal, Fr Vanpeene, to let them first finish their finals. Only Pat’s Roman faith saved him from losing a year, for he was able to gain entry to St Aloysius’ School, Mangalore, a Catholic centre on the West Coast, from where he passed out and went on to college. (His brother Ralph got off more lightly in his last year. He fused all the lights in Big Study by inserting silver-paper between a bulb and its socket, thus causing a short-circuit. Confessing to the crime, he was told he need not return the next year if he failed in his Senior Cambridge, due shortly to be held. As he had just won all his class prizes, the Principal could hardly keep the twinkle from his eye when conveying this to my mother after she had finished pleading for yet another errant son!)

Outdoors, Pat had been a brilliant athlete and a “natural” at all games, sweeping the board in track and field and easily making the First XI in hockey, footer and cricket. Tennis and golf came later. But when about to finish his Intermediate, he was told he had a “heart condition”, and though it was later found to be a wrong diagnosis - the brisk ten-mile walk he had to complete within a given time as part of his medicals for the Forest Service was to prove that - he heeded it at the time. He ceased all games and athletics during his three years at Presidency and contented himself with coaching teams and refereeing matches, a heart-breaking pastime for one so keen and good in the field. To add to his anguish, all the cups and medals he had earlier won were misappropriated by a fellow boarder in Madras. It was a needless loss, for he could have left them safely at home. Overall, however, things worked out for the best, for by foregoing sport he was able to concentrate on his studies, pass his Honours in

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Geology, and do sufficiently well in the all-India examination to get into the Indian Forest Service. Even then, too, he had to overcome a major hitch.

To ensure that members of minority communities did not go wholly unrepresented in the superior services, a small number of posts were reserved for them from time to time, subject to their suitability. (This was apart from the large number of upper-subordinate posts specially reserved for Anglo-Indians.) In 1928, Pat's year, there were five IFS vacancies in all, four to be filled in order of merit, and the fifth by a candidate from a minority community. Pat ranked fifth overall and first among members of the minorities who sat for the test. On that score he was appointed automatically to the reserved vacancy. He went on to become a Chief Conservator of Forests and an author and consultant of world standing on forests and wildlife.

The system of reservations, long prevalent under the British, has its parallel today in what is called affirmative action, and nowhere more so than among the many vocal castes and creeds in India where it has become a tooth and claw affair. It has two serious and inherent defects: it causes bitterness and frustration among those of higher merit who lose out to the less deserving, and it opens the door wide to corruption and nepotism. There was no such heart-burning when I was selected for the IP in 1942, for though one of the two vacancies in Madras Presidency was reserved for a Harijan, I came first in the all-India examination and thus filled the unreserved vacancy on merit. (It was later thought by some that I had got in because of my minority status, an impression I had occasionally to dispel.)

By the middle of 1935 my mother and I were the only ones left in Bangalore. The girls were doing their respective training at Calcutta and Madras, and Cyril had just finished his first term at the IMA, with another four to go. The fees were a thousand rupees a term, a huge amount in those days, and the family was at a loss to find the money. A King's Scholarship that entailed exemption from all fees was available for a deserving candidate, but the central

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government in its wisdom chose to give it to the son of a senior and highly paid ICS officer. That he rose to become the head of the Indian Army before he retired did not justify the original inequity. Incidentally, Cyril was the third in the family to train at Dehra Dun. My father, on promotion as Deputy Ranger, had been sent for training at the Forest College there in 1896. (The medals he won for Natural Science and Forest Engineering now hang in the College Mess, presented by Pat when he was Director of Forest Education there sixty years later). Pat himself, of course, did his initial training there as an IFS probationer.

Now that there were just the two of us, our big house in Rose Lane had become a luxury. Pat, despite help from Doreen, was feeling the financial strain. The two of them had their own homes, as did Ralph, and all were willing to have my mother stay with them at least until Cyril was off their hands, while I went in as a boarder. Pat came down from Assam to make the break. He was not lacking in family sentiment, but he steeled himself and sold up. Out went piano, furniture (including my father's easy-chair), books and their shelves, and most of the other stuff that the family had accumulated over the years as it grew up. It was distressing to my mother, who clung firmly to some of her more precious belongings like our dining-table and her ebony cot, both of which my father had had made under his personal supervision, "Grandpa's chair" which had come down to her through the generations, a few essentials like a chest-of-drawers and a wardrobe that we called an almirah, a small medicine cabinet that she was never without, some crockery and cutlery of sentimental value, and lastly a large wooden container known as the "organ box", used throughout her district days to carry a small pedal-organ on which she taught every one of her children the rudiments of piano. I do not recall where she kept them; possibly with her sister Eva, of whom more anon. But it was with a sad heart that she set sail for Rangoon where, home-sick and unhappy, she stayed for a while with Tom, my father's last surviving brother who, after getting his degree in India, had been selected as a Deputy Magistrate in Burma and had married a pretty, first-generation Anglo-Burman he chose from a convent.

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On return to India my mother lived for a time with Ralph, then went on to Bara Banki in the United Provinces where Doreen was a government doctor. She was happier with Ralph at Kalimpong, a beautiful little hill station in the lower Himalayas not very far from Darjeeling, for there she had the company of her very first grandchild, Ralph's daughter Patricia whom her mother called Suzanne. Yet she never ceased longing for a home of her own, and when she returned to Bangalore two years later to go into rooms, the things she had saved were waiting for her to use. I lived with her throughout most of my two years in the Intermediate, and spent my holiday breaks with her during my next three years in college at Madras.

Eva was her younger sister, but none of us called her anything but Nan, for she was unmarried and earned her living as a nanny or house-keeper for most of her life. When out of employ, she lived with us as one of the family. I remember her from my earliest days in Curley Street where she joined us after the death of one of her charges, a mentally defective boy who lived in a railway colony on the East Coast. She later took other jobs, the last two in Bangalore, before she grew too old to work, after which she made her home with us for good. She died in her seventies in 1952, but not before coming to the family's help at a time of acute need. In this she was joined by two kind friends: Mrs. Falcon, for whose two children she had been a nanny, and Mrs. Galiffe who, I was told, nearly caused me to choke to death at my christening party by touching my tongue with ginger wine. Nan's savings were small; the other two were rich, but all of them joined together to lend my mother the five thousand rupees needed for Cyril's fees. Pat stood guarantee and paid the interest until Cyril was on his feet and could clear the entire debt. This he did from the pay that had accumulated when he was a prisoner of war in Malaya. Incidentally, it was from these same savings that he was able to lend me the cost of my first car, a 1937 model Chevrolet released by the Air Raids Precautions service after the danger to Madras city ceased when the Japanese finally withdrew from the Bay of Bengal. I bought it for the controlled price of two

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thousand rupees and sold it for the same amount before taking an urgent war-posting outside the province while price-controls were still in place. Later I had to pay three times that amount for an equally old Ford after the controls were lifted.

Doreen never married. After working in the Catholic mission hospital at Kumbakonam, she joined the United Provinces medical department where she served as superintendent of more than one district women's hospital. When war broke out she took a commission in the Indian Army Medical Corps, served in Base Hospitals in the Eastern Theatre, and retired as a Captain. When peace returned she took her release in England where she studied for a higher degree. After getting her MR COG she stayed on and practised in London until her eightieth year. She was a good daughter and sister who, like Pat, stood firmly by the family after our father died, helping our mother with money to run the home and seeing to the younger ones' higher education. And though she was never able to fulfil her hope of sending me to Oxford, I am ever grateful for her help in launching me on life.

Pat's marriage to Ruth Beatty in 1938 was ill-omened from the start. She was a music mistress, and though from an old railway family, had something of the "domiciled" mentality. She was not at home with Pat's Indian friends and did not take kindly to district life in Assam. She pined for her family who had earlier migrated to England, and left to join them just before the war for the birth of her baby. It was a girl whom they named Pamela, and she was only three when her mother decided to make the voyage back to India, risking the danger of prowling U-boats. Their ship was torpedoed off the Cape and both were drowned, so that Pat never saw his only child. He had no children by his two later marriages, a loss to the Stracey line, for he was the finest of men in every sense.

He was to have other disappointments. Much as he wanted to, he could never till late in life afford to go overseas, whether to attend a World Olympics, his one great longing, or to visit the forests of other countries. He spent all his earlier leaves with my mother or

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visiting Ralph or me in our districts. Professionally, his happiest years were the five he spent as Director of Forest Education at Dehra Dun. His second marriage to an Eileen Lever, a war-widow, had ended in divorce by then, and there he met his third wife, Peace Mammen, daughter of a padre, and with her returned to Assam on appointment as its Chief Conservator of Forests. He managed to see the Rome Olympics before his last official assignment as Director of Forestry of the newly formed state of Nagaland, a tribal area with which he was already familiar. He was too full of energy to remain idle in retirement. While at Dehra Dun he founded the Wildlife Preservation Society of India, in which he continued to take the keenest interest after he retired. He wrote five books based on his many experiences and the interesting people he had known, and served as forest and wildlife consultant to such bodies as the National Council of Applied Economic Research, the Government of Nepal and the Government of Ethiopia. When, at age seventy, he was told he had cancer, he reacted typically, vowing to face it with mind-control and will-power. He packed his bags and headed for Bastar in central India to study the interaction between the tribals there and wildlife. But his health soon declined and he returned to die in Bangalore in 1977, unaware that he had been included by the World Wildlife Fund in its Roll of Honour, but helping for a time to manage the school founded by Ralph, who had died earlier, in memory of our parents who had spared nothing to give all their children a good education.

Pat deserved better of life. Maintaining the service standards then expected of one in his position - open house, adequate servants and a decent table (he neither drank nor smoked), and giving himself such minimum pleasures as golf and congenial company at the district club, even while helping to maintain the family, - left him with little cash to spare. But he had good friends, especially in Ramabhadran, a Brahmin classmate of his at Presidency College and later a service colleague in Assam. Bhadri, as Pat called him, had married Gowri, the sister of the Raja of Kollengode, a small state in Malabar where the custom was for ladies of royal status to marry only into a higher caste, which in her case had to be a Brahmin.

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They were, of course, never short of money, and how generously Bhadri stood by Pat I discovered soon after they died within months of each other, when his widow showed me an old notebook of his. In it were noted the amounts he had lent Pat from time to time, and the dates they had been returned. Indeed, Pat was part of their family, in which they later included me. So sentimental were Gowri's feelings towards our family that when I visited her during her last illness in a Madras hospital, she reached out, drew my head close, and kissed me good-bye. It was an act no Indian lady, let alone one of high caste, would normally have brought herself to do, and I sensed the shock of those others present.

Strained though he was for cash, Pat lost no time in insuring my life as soon as I turned eighteen for the then large sum of six thousand rupees. He paid the premium personally until I started work and was able to do so myself. I raised it to twenty five thousand after my first promotion, cheerfully believing that, along with my pension of about eight hundred rupees a month, a modest provident fund, and an equally modest family pension payable to my wife only after I died, it would suffice for the future. I did receive an extra hundred a month as War Allowance which ended when peace returned, but possible inflation was something we did not really think about or cater for then as people do now. Salaries, pensions, gratuities and provident funds have increased immeasurably since those days, notably under Rajiv Gandhi, whose grandfather Nehru railed against the excessively high salaries we of the imperial services were drawing out of an impoverished Indian treasury. He had forgotten that, to their credit, officers of both imperial and provincial services, who were invariably worth more than their salaries, had accepted substantial cuts during the Great Depression when government's revenues were at their lowest. Though I made a point of sending my very first cheque - a modest twenty five rupees - to my mother the day I drew my first salary, I lost an opportunity to be of substantial help to Pat in the last years of his life. When he had finally retired in Bangalore, he asked me to look around for a second-hand car for him in Madras. I was then I-G of Police there, and I suppose he felt that my early experience in inspecting motor vehicles

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could be relied on. I thought I had taken adequate technical advice about the one I finally chose, but it turned out to be a very poor buy and gave him endless trouble. I should have thought of putting in some money of my own, which I could then easily afford, and bought him a newer model. Helping to move him to a special ward and to pay his hospital expenses during his last illness in Bangalore eased my regret only slightly.

When Ralph's marriage ended in divorce, his wife returned to England after the war with their son Justin to join their daughter who had been sent "home" to school ten years earlier. The main cause of the breakdown was probably his heavy indebtedness at the very outset, compounded by the European standard of life they felt they had to maintain without the generous overseas allowance that only British officers drew. (Pat, Cyril and I were in the same case. As Indians, none of us drew these large allowances that enabled our British colleagues to maintain their higher standards of life. That Ralph passed into the ICS in England made no difference.) Another cause was his wife's inability to adjust to India (she tended to show signs of escapism when she changed her name from May to Wendy and her daughter's from Patricia to Suzanne). His second wife was Phyllis Bell of Calcutta whom he married when he was District Magistrate, Howrah. They had a daughter Christine, now married and settled in California with her husband Matthew Kurien and their two sons. When Phyllis died early, Ralph retired prematurely from service, became a Director of Imperial Tobaccos, Calcutta, and later married a third time. His wife Nancy had a baby, Judith Ann, born in 1962, but it lived for less than a day. They had no more children. Nancy is alive in Bangalore as I write.

His sixteen years in the ICS saw him fill various posts besides Magistrate and Collector. These included spells as a District Judge, Secretary to Government, and Special Officer, Famine Relief, during the great Bengal famine of 1943. He also spent time on special liaison duty with the army at Comilla, an important take-off point for operations against the Japs in Burma. (When Lady Wavell, the Viceroy's wife, came to visit troops in the area, it fell to him to take

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her home to lunch. That he completely omitted earlier to inform his wife that she was to be their guest was, I suppose, sufficient grounds alone for divorce!). As DM, Howrah, he had to cope with some of the bloodiest outbreaks of communal killings in the years before and after the partition of India. During this period he sometimes found himself receiving conflicting instructions direct from the Governor and the Chief Secretary. To resolve the dilemma, he sensibly acted as he thought fit, but it was an unenviable situation, and capping years of official strain that started with his first posting to terrorist-ridden Bengal, it led him to decide on premature retirement. Even while with Imperial Tobaccos, his health began to deteriorate, and he died in 1975 at the age of sixty six. His charm, good nature and sense of humour are still fresh in my memory, and his command of the language and his ease as a raconteur make me wish he had written his memoirs.

Though his first wife told the children very little about their father, his son Justin, unlike his daughter Patricia, did not lose interest in him. All he knew from his mother was that Ralph had been a magistrate in Bengal, and he presumed from the name that he was European. But sensing his mother's reluctance to talk about our family, all of whom she had met in India, he did not press her. It was not until she died in 1981 that he and his wife Elizabeth started a search for us. The story of how they found us reads like a fairy tale, and I may tell it some day. It finally ended in 1983 with an emotional family reunion with Ralph's widow Nancy at Bangalore, where I joined them from Canberra. I helped to show them and their two young sons Ben and Thomas something of south India, including a day in Mysore, a night in a game-reserve, and visits to tea and coffee plantations. We ended up at our home in Coonoor, in which Cyril was living alone. Their great sorrow was to have missed meeting Ralph who had died eight years earlier. We kept in touch after their return to England and were planning another gathering in 1988, this time with Christine and her family, but fate ruled otherwise. Christine could not make it, and Cyril died the month before our intended reunion. I returned to India in 1989 only to wind up his affairs and to sell "Charleston". Justin died young in 1998.

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Margaret married soon after she completed her training as a nurse. Her husband Charles Leslie was the son of a Scottish planter and an Indian estate worker by whom he had seven children, all of whom he owned to and educated at Bangalore, the boys at Bishop Cotton's and the girls at Baldwin's. Following a family disagreement, the father never let Charles work either of the two tea estates he owned in the then state of Travancore on the Malabar Coast. Instead, he gave him a remittance on which, I am sorry to say, he and Margaret lived a sadly wasted life in Bangalore. Margaret failed to put her training as a nurse to good use, and lived to regret it. Charles died in his early fifties, Margaret at seventy six. I was happy to have been of some help to her on my first return visit to India in 1980, when I found her nursing a broken arm and a dislocated shoulder. Though her doctor thought her condition called for an operation, the orthopaedic specialist advised against surgery because of her age and state of health. But I was lucky enough to find a country bone-setter who, almost miraculously to my mind, set her right using only herbal poultices, oils and splints.

I had found her living alone in a cramped and unsuitable part of the Stracey school, eating poorly and generally neglecting herself. Also, her presence on the school premises was causing unpleasant complications, and it was clear to me that, at seventy one, she needed to move to a place where she could be cared for. When her broken arm had mended, I managed to get her to agree to come with me to Coonoor and make her home with Cyril. But sadly, the two of them proved incompatible, and after I returned to Australia, Cyril found her accommodation in a retirement home run by the Nuns of St Joseph in Whitefield, twelve miles from Bangalore. She went unwillingly, for her roots were in Bangalore and she never ceased to want to return there and live on her own. But difficulties of accommodation apart, she was now clearly in need of the sort of personal care that, in the absence of family or money of her own, she could find only at the hands of the nuns. She grew irritable and depressed, and when I returned to India for the second time in 1983, I could see she was in decline. I cried for my favourite sister when the

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time came for me to say good-bye, for I knew I would not see her again. She had a mild heart attack early in 1986, and it seems she asked for me then. But the nuns failed to inform either Cyril or me, thus preventing us from seeing her. Later she had a more serious attack, and died without any of her family by her side. I dearly wish I could have given her a home or at least been with her in her last days.

Winnie took her degree in History and Politics before doing her teacher's training. She taught in various schools in India, including Baldwins Girls and St Hilda's, Ootacamund, before interrupting her career to take a commission in the Women's Auxiliary Corps (India), in which she rose to be a Captain. Her late marriage to Charles Adams, an army officer and Cyril's batchmate at the IMA, did not fare well and ended in separation. He got to the rank of Lt. Colonel before retiring, and died in 1977 at his home in Dehra Dun, which he left to an Anglo-Indian charity for the elderly. Winnie migrated to England, where she taught for many years in London while living close to Doreen in Chiswick. Her erstwhile pupils both in India and England remember her as a competent teacher of history and English, and a good sports and guide mistress. She had no children, and died in 1989.

Cyril, on release from the Red Fort, worked for a year as Secretary of the INA Relief and Rehabilitation Committee in New Delhi, which proved of help to many refugees during the large-scale carnage at the time of partition. He later had a most interesting career in the Indian Foreign Service, with postings in Karachi, Bonn, Jakarta, as Consul-General at San Francisco, First Secretary at Washington and Chancellor in Paris, finishing with spells as ambassador to Finland and Madagascar. He resisted my plea when he retired to set down his memoirs based on his experiences in Malaya and of his twenty eight years as a diplomat, and I did not stay with him long or often enough to make notes of his experiences. It is a loss to future generations of the family.

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We were an individualistic lot, each with our own traits and foibles, the latter so many and so laughable, it seems, that those who were close to us and remember us best - my wife Joyce and Ralph's Nancy, abetted by our two sons, - often threaten to put us into a book of family humour. I hope they do some day. But for me, even though I can recall, with much nostalgia now, each of my parents and my brothers and sisters as distinct and lively personalities, it is of the family as a whole and of myself as an integral part of it that I am most aware. After our father died, we younger ones, realising our financial situation, felt compelled to become even stricter than before in our demands on life. Though we were not actually poor, lived in a decent house, ate adequately, dressed passably, and usually had something to spare for a Saturday afternoon picture (and, after my first painful experience of running bare-footed, always enough for a pair of "spikes" when Sports Day approached), we went without many a thing that we saw our friends enjoying. My own economies included some that were amusing and a few that were painful, a couple of which are worth relating.

One memorable feat took place during my scout excursion to Tindivanam and Gingee. With my mother away looking after Cyril in Assam, the house was left to the care of Margaret and Winnie, who, after having spent the money for the house-rent on dress materials and tailors, the cinema, and quantities of summer mango ice-cream made at home in a hand-driven churner, decided to economise by giving me just one rupee for my expenses to and fro. The journey, made by slow passenger train, took a full twenty four hours during which I spent all but two annas of my precious rupee. Before moving on from Tindivanam to Gingee I naturally wrote home asking for more money, at least for food on the journey back, but nary a paisa did I get. Later, my sisters swore that I had not given them a return address to which they could have sent it to me, and in hindsight, I give them the benefit of the doubt, for I have always been prone to forget minor matters of that sort! I was too shy to reveal my predicament to our Scout Master or to borrow from my mates, so I made the journey home on just two annas, spending them on a dozen nungoos which, being mostly water, did little to satisfy

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my school-boy hunger. It was not until we reached Bangalore the next morning that help appeared in the person of a friend who was collecting tickets on the platform. I told him my tale and he lent me a rupee, with which I proceeded to tuck into as hearty a breakfast as ever a hungry boy-scout downed at a railway refreshment room! That, and the severe sunburn I suffered at Tindivanam in the course of building a trestle-bridge over a nullah one searing afternoon, are my two most vivid memories of that scout trip. But I did return home knowing how to swim.

There were other equally memorable instances of making do. Being the youngest of four brothers generally ensured a ready supply of hand-me-downs. Before I grew tall enough to wear them unaltered, Cyril's pants and coats used to be sized to suit me, often accompanied by much discreet darning. It was a process not always without risk. One pair of his shorts, darned at the seat, failed its primary purpose when, on the occasion already mentioned, the third "bender" from the priest with the hard heart and muscular arm split it right across. But my problem was mostly with shirts. I remember once, as a day-scholar, needing a clean shirt to wear and, lacking one of my own, having to don one of Winnie's sports blouses for school, hoping that the embroidered pocket, the girlish shape of the collar, and the reverse position of the buttons would not be too noticeable under my coat. On another occasion, I solved the problem by wearing a shirt with a dirty collar inside out, with a necktie well pinned down to hide the reversed buttoning, and a coat to hide the rest! Among my other economies were the use of the common hibiscus flower as blacking for my shoes, and of finger, salt and charcoal-powder in place of tooth-brush and paste.

Though I had my own copies of Christopher Robin and later of classics like *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped*, *Gulliver's Travels* and *Moby Dick*, along with the doings of Masters Sawyer and Finn to satisfy my love of reading, I had to rely on friends to share their comics. *The Rainbow*, featuring Tiger Tim and his gang, was a special favourite, but I also borrowed their copies of *Gem* and *Magnet* containing Frank Richard's superb public-school yarns

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involving Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Billy Bunter and Hari Jamset Ram Singh, with one or other of whom I invariably identified closely. Borrowed, too, were the weightier books like Chums and Boys Own Annual, and of course as many of Richmal Compton's incomparable "William" series as I could carry home. All this was at an age when I felt a small boy's self-consciousness at having to go without some of the things my friends enjoyed. But seventy years later, I realise how small these deprivations really were, and how great the benefit I derived from them. Today I am happily indifferent to money and material goods. I spend little on myself, think nothing of wearing second-hand clothes bought from our local St Vincent de Paul's "Op Shop", and look on helping the poor, especially those in India, as my most rewarding activity.

I was far from being the only one in the family to feel the pinch. Even when my father was alive we had had to cut things very fine, for bringing up seven children on an honest provincial servant's pay was quite a strain. When friends jokingly asked him where he put his rusty rupees he would smile and answer with modest pride, "In the brains of my children". My wife and I later came naturally to share the same view of education, and we were happy to give our own two sons the very best, fortunately without need of the scholarships and loans my parents had to rely on. At the time he died my father's anxiety must have been tempered by the thought of how wisely he had invested in the education of his older children who were on their feet by then and willingly took on the rest of the family. But it was touch and go up to the time that I myself got into service in 1943.

My mother was never braver than in those years immediately following my father's death. She quelled her worries by regularly reading from her bible, often quoting the more consoling bits aloud, especially from the Psalms, and would keep her spirits up by singing or humming her favourite songs. As soon as her allowance from Pat and Doreen arrived, invariably by the fifth of each month, she would pay the servant, the grocer and the house-rent (her great regret was never having been able to own even a cottage of her own). Then as often as not she would run out of money before the end of the month.

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Until her next allowance arrived, we would make do with canned food, curry-puffs and bread which was always available on credit. In fact, our grocer - one of three corner-shops run by Tamilian converts to Islam whose community was known locally as Lubbais - supplied everything against chits signed by my mother which the servant or one of us children would take to his shop and collect the goods. Usman's bill, carefully itemised on long strips of paper and supported by the chits, would be sent to us early each month and would be promptly paid. It must have included a generous profit, for today the families of Usman and his fellow grocers Rasheed and Aladin, aided by large infusions of money from the Arab Gulf, own many houses in Richmond Town, some of them new and quite palatial.

For good measure, Mrs. D'Cruz, a frail old friend and neighbour in similar straits, would sometimes drop in and ask for a small loan to see her through till the end of the month. Nothing daunted, my mother would put on her hat and hie off to pawn her bangles with the local money-lender, one of a ubiquitous clan of Marwari *sowcars* from distant Rajasthan, but to be found wherever there was a profit to be made. Ours could be found sitting on a mattress on the floor, leaning against a large bolster and doing business in his one-room shop situated in the main alley of our local patch. He grew rich even faster than our local grocer simply through the extortionate interest he charged.

My mother did not lose her jewelry to him, for most of what little she had went to a thief. He walked into the house through a rear bathroom door one afternoon when she was alone and resting in her bedroom, and cleaned out the drawer of her table in the next room. She heard the noise of the bamboo *chik* being disturbed, but thought it was the wind. The jewels, of great sentimental value, were never recovered, despite the best efforts of the police - and a description of the thief by a soothsayer who plied his trade in the city. To her great credit, she never once asked any of her children for more money than they sent her, no matter how strained the situation was at home. Nothing pleased her more than to welcome an evening visitor with

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whom she would talk endlessly, mostly about her children, to whom, incidentally, she wrote with unfailing regularity. Concerned to keep us abreast of affairs, her letters from wherever she happened to be would usually contain interesting clippings from the newspapers she invariably read in the afternoons before taking her siesta.

Pat and Ralph were, if anything, under greater strain. Even when they were students in Madras they were invariably short of cash, and my mother often spoke of the kindness of her cousin, Millie Dampier, with whom they boarded, in meeting some of their smaller needs. One that she particularly remembered was Millie giving Ralph eight annas to have his shoes resoled by a street *chuckla*. Nor was he any better off when studying in London, where he sometimes had to pawn his overcoat for a bit of ready cash. He bought his suits second-hand in Petticoat Lane, and when he came out he handed them down to Cyril. One was a well-cut brown serge which Cyril passed on to me when he left to join the IMA. At fifteen and prematurely tall, I found this fourth-hand suit fitted me exactly, and I remember Margaret telling me how smart I looked in it. Another hand-me-down from Cyril was my father's last Sunday suit, a neat grey woollen, complete with waistcoat.

Cyril lived on at "Charleston" until his death in November 1988, enjoying his music and his books, but keeping much to himself. Apart from a bachelor friend or two, his only company was a Marwari family, the Simrathmulls, who lived near-by. They were generous and open-hearted friends - husband, wife and five bright sons, - who had him over for dinner every Sunday night and ran errands for him. (He did not keep a car in his latter years and did not like going down to the bazaar in person). As a humourous sidelight, when their business ran into trouble, Cyril helped them with a loan which they duly repaid - a strange case of an Anglo-Indian, a member of a notoriously prodigal community not known for its wealth, lending money to one whose people constituted the traditional bankers and money-lenders of the north! When Cyril had a sudden and fatal heart attack, it was they who rushed him to

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hospital and later helped carry his coffin in a last gesture of friendship.